

CO-SUPERVISORS' LETTER OF SUPPORT

Sonia Letourneau

From: Christine Bourbonnais-Hendley
Sent: 15 mars 2013 21:38
To: DEANGRAD
Subject: FW: Request Letter to the Dean (Mr. Nicholas Ali, PhD candidate).
Attachments: Request letter to the Dean, Dr. Hastings (from Nicholas Ali's co-advisor).pdf

Pour vous.

Christine B. Hendley
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-----Original Message-----

From: Gholamreza Rouhi [mailto:grouhi@uottawa.ca]
Sent: Friday, March 15, 2013 3:49 AM
To: Christine Bourbonnais-Hendley
Subject: Request Letter to the Dean (Mr. Nicholas Ali, PhD candidate).

Dear Ms. Hendley,
This email is from Mr. Nicholas Ali's PhD thesis co-advisor. The attached letter is a request to the Dean, Dr. Hastings, in regard to Mr. Nicholas Ali's PhD thesis defense.

Would you please confirm if you've received my email?
Best regards,
GR

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Gholamreza Rouhi, PhD
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Biomedical Engineering, Amirkabir University of Technology, Tehran, Iran
<http://bme2.aut.ac.ir/odbl/>

Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, ON, Canada

March 14, 2013

Dear Dr. Hastings,

This letter is in regard to Mr. Nicholas Ali's PhD thesis, and the decision made on his dissertation by the Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies. I was Nicholas's PhD co-advisor from the 1st day of his doctoral studies at the University of Ottawa. Unfortunately, I left University of Ottawa almost one year ago because of my wife's situation. I'm always eager to serve Canada, a great land, where I surely owe to, as well as to support my previous school, University of Ottawa, in any capacity I can- this is my heartfelt. Needless to mention that I, so far, spent numerous hours of my time to support Mr. Ali, and do expect to see an acceptable outcome at the end of his PhD. I am happy of devoting considerable amount of my time to supervise this student, because of the outcomes I see from his thesis. I am very sure that what he has done during his PhD at the University of Ottawa is enough to grant him a PhD degree, but am not sure if he could present his work in a solid and convincing way.

After hearing that two examiners are still negative about Nicholas's work and he cannot defend his thesis, my first impression, honestly speaking, was that this is not a scientific motion, but just politics. But, after carefully reviewing the respected examiners' questions, comments, and criticisms on Nicholas's revised thesis, my negative impression was changed, and the following points came to my mind, which I'd like to share with you, and am very positive to get your support that can give benefit to my previous school (University of Ottawa), the hopeless and depressed student, the advisors, and also the science: (a) The negative impression of the examiners was mainly caused by the way the thesis was written down, i.e. as a collection of published/accepted/submitted papers, which did not have in many cases a smooth flow, and can easily mislead the readers/reviewers. Moreover, another key factor for the harsh review of one of the internal examiners was the immature behavior of the student, which I hope can be addressed now; (b) Another main factor for encouraging the examiners to be as critical, and possibly harsh, as possible, was including two review articles, in which some idealistic approaches have been proposed to tackle the problem of *non-contact ACL injury during single-leg landing activity*, but not included/applied in the proposed methodology in the real sense in the thesis; (c) The most critical reviewer was Dr. Lemaire with mostly very appreciable and constructive comments (and very few number of harsh comments, and tough expectations), which the former comments can

improve Nicholas's work, as well as the way the thesis was written down. The student was advised to carefully apply all constructive comments of this respected reviewer, and provide point-by-point answer to his other (tough expectations) comments/questions. We, those who are working in multidisciplinary fields, such as biomechanics, all know that nobody's work is flawless, so we should not expect a PhD student to do a flawless work, or a work which contains and include all points that I, as a reviewer or examiner like and am aware of, or am concerned about; (d) Regarding Dr. Caldwell's comments, most of them can be easily addressed. His comments are also very constructive and he believes that it is almost impossible to fully understand the results of the experiments, and the value of the conclusions. We highly respect his concern, and the student is fully ready to address his concerns in regard to the validity of our results. One main reason to mislead this respected examiner was the way the thesis was written, as well as inclusion of the review papers with idealistic and critical thoughts, which were not applied in practice in Mr. Ali's thesis; and (e) Dr. Pierrynowski's comments are also constructive and quite addressable, but his concern is that his comments cannot be fully addressed in a short period of time, which we do agree.

After more than five years working with Nicholas, I can say that this student is a very independent, hard working, ambitious, and sharp student. He has a very solid background in basic Mechanical Engineering courses, and due to his presence at the School of Human Kinetics, he has now a very good understanding of Knee Biomechanics, Biomechanics of Musculoskeletal Systems, as well as Human Kinetics. Nicholas is now familiar with many experimental methods, which are employed in studying human movement. Moreover, because of his presence in a well-known school of Biomechanics in Denmark, in order to do one phase of his PhD, he is now familiar with a powerful tool to analyze various human motion disorders. In regard to Mr. Ali's personality and maturity, honestly speaking, when I compare his behavior when he started his PhD at the School of Human Kinetics with his current attitude and behavior, he is much mature in both his behavior and interactions and communications with others, and also in the way of thinking and tackling scientific problems.

I do believe that Mr. Nicholas Ali's work deserves more appreciation, as it is based on an important and well-defined problem with a solid methodology and approach; but his thesis should be fully reshaped, as it is, in its current shape, misleading. I cannot even imagine leaving

this student without a PhD degree, considering his exemplary effort during last 5 years, as well as his great contributions to the field of biomechanics. Thus, I'd humbly like to request you, respected Dean of FGPS, please to give Mr. Ali a couple more months, I think if you kindly agree to give him 4 more months, i.e. till Sep. 2013, to fully address all the reviewers' comments, and to re-write his thesis with a smooth flow and in a more precise and convincing way. I will strongly support Mr. Nicholas Ali, as I did so far (even after leaving University of Ottawa, in spite of my abnormally tough life in Iran), in order to finish his job strongly and successfully. I again greatly appreciate all the examiners' comments, and promise to continue my strong support to this student who is in a very tough and abnormal situation. I also very much appreciate your kind attention to my request in advance.

Sincerely,

Gholamreza Rouhi, PhD

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Biomedical Engineering, Amirkabir University of Technology, Tehran, Iran, <http://bme2.aut.ac.ir/odbl/>

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, ON, Canada

14 February 2013

Appeals Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
University of Ottawa

Dear Committee members

I am writing in support of **Mr. Nicholas Ali's** appeal regarding his thesis committee's decision that his article-format thesis is not ready for an oral defence. The decision not to allow a defence has then resulted in a failure to complete his PhD. This is an unfair result considering the years he has committed to the degree and the success he has had in publishing five peer-reviewed publications. In particular, three of the publications are due to scientific research and have advanced the state of knowledge concerning the topic of his thesis research. I would also add that he was by far the principal author of all the papers and the thesis documents. His supervisors (myself and Dr. Rouhi) were mostly editors of his papers and advisors to the procedures taken to quantify and analyze the data. Mr. Nicholas is completely responsible for the contents of the papers. You will notice two additional authors on one paper. These were professors at another university that helped him with the development of his single-leg landing model. Such a model did not exist before Mr. Ali's thesis was completed. This testifies to his contribution to knowledge—a requirement of a PhD candidate. In other words, he has fulfilled all the requirements of a doctoral candidate as outlined on the FGPS's website:

A doctoral thesis must constitute a significant contribution to knowledge, embody the results of original investigation and analysis on the part of the student and be of such quality as to merit publication.

I do not believe that the concerns expressed by the thesis examiners should have resulted in an outright failure. I have spoken with Mr. Ali about a number of the concerns and feel he could defend his thesis papers successfully.

Sincerely,



D. Gordon E. Robertson, PhD
Emeritus Professor
Fellow of the Canadian Society for Biomechanics